

SERVING SINGLE MOTHERS

I was a widow for three and a half years with five small children before I served as stake Relief Society president. I have had many opportunities to help others become more aware of single mothers and the challenges their families face. I know from experience how important it is for those who attend bishop's council to pay close attention to "the cries of the widow and the fatherless" (D&C 136:8). Home teachers, visiting teachers, and other fellow ward members can do much to help.

"Let us know if you need anything." This common home teaching and visiting teaching offer may be helpful to some members, but others are too shy to ask for help. Instead, what if we were to observe what needs to be done and offer specific help? "We just mowed our yard. Would you like help with yours?" Offers to help with yard maintenance, as well as home and mechanical repairs, can lighten a family's load tremendously.

If you are a Melchizedek Priesthood holder, you might also offer priesthood blessings at the beginning of the school year, when

there is illness, or when comfort is needed. Establish a good friendship so the family will feel welcome to ask for or accept an offer to receive a priesthood blessing.

Seek opportunities to be a mentor.

Particularly if the children in your family and those of a single mother are of similar ages, offer to help with hobbies or school and Church projects. You might attend some of their activities if it's feasible. When you and your son attend a father-son activity, include a boy who has no father at home. Pair a priesthood-age son with a home teacher who is a good example. Teach basic skills such as mowing the lawn, changing the oil in the car, fixing a flat tire—things a dad might teach a child.

Support the mother. Single mothers may seek insights about child rearing or

overcoming feelings of loneliness and other frustrations. They need to feel comfortable turning to a bishop, home teachers and visiting teachers, or ward friends who are truly willing to assist them as they provide for their families and try to maintain a gospel-centered home.

Diane D. Woolf, Arizona

REAL PICTURES, REAL PRINCIPLES

When you teach real doctrines and principles," our stake Primary music leader said, "you need real pictures." I knew she was right and that her message also came from the Primary





Things I Love about You

Little did we know that one family home evening activity would have such a lasting impact on us.

Inspired by lessons at seminary, my brother Dennis decided to help us share positive comments about one another. He gave each of us enough pieces of paper to write something about each of our eight family members. At the top of these pages it said, "Things I love about _____," followed by 10 numbered spaces for our comments. We soon got busy filling in the blanks. When we finished, we exchanged the pages written about us so that

each person received 80 compliments. Of course, we all enjoyed reading others' positive impressions of us, but the full impact of this activity was yet to come. Throughout the years, I sometimes struggled to make righteous choices or to feel good about myself. During these low points, I would turn to these special pages that I kept in my journal and re-read them to feel hopeful and loved. I thought I was the only

one who had kept them, but after my sister Taunya died from leukemia in September 2001, I found her journal. Tucked inside was her set of well-worn pages with our family's praises. When I shared this with my siblings, they all said that they, too, had kept their copies close by in times of trial. Our family has been blessed to know that we love and support one another—forever. **Wendy Allred, Colorado**



general board. Though I had often used commercially prepared materials to illustrate the Primary songs I was teaching, I resolved to find "real pictures."

I soon found a variety of good sources—some right in my home—that I could use as is, cut out, or copied. Church magazines, the Gospel Art Picture Kit, old lesson manual picture packets, illustrated scripture readers, the family home evening manual, and the *Children's Songbook* have been some of my best and most readily available resources. Sometimes I have had to search a little to find just the right visual, but the effect is worth it. A cartoon sketch does not convey the same feelings as a beautiful piece of art or other carefully prepared illustrations or pictures. I have a testimony that using Church-approved visuals invites the Spirit to enlighten the children's minds as they learn and sing gospel truths.

NOTE

Items listed above are available through LDS Church distribution centers. If you do not live near a distribution center, you can place orders online at www.ldscatalog.com. U.S. and Canadian residents may also telephone the Salt Lake Distribution Center at 1-800-537-5971.

Jeanne Koniuszy, Arizona

CARDS THAT KEEP

I gave my wife what I thought was a one-time gift for Christmas, but when Valentine's Day drew close, I saw my gift as one that could truly "keep on giving." I enjoy giving cards to my wife, but I realized that

they were usually read once or twice and then tossed into a box or binder or discarded in the trash. I wanted something that would be long lasting for my wife to read again and again. So I substituted an inexpensive notebook for my Christmas card and wrote down my memories and feelings about our courtship and marriage. There was no specific order or theme to my entries. I just wrote down what came to mind.

When Valentine's Day approached, I decided to pull out the notebook, write down my feelings once again, and wrap it up as my "card." After

this, the notebook entries weren't just for holiday gifts. Now anytime she does something kind for me or I feel a rush of love and appreciation for her, I pull out the notebook and record those feelings. I never tell her when I have added an entry. I let her be surprised when she checks the notebook periodically.

And I was pleasantly surprised for my birthday when my wife gave me my own "notebook card," sharing her feelings for me. We look forward to filling these notebooks and many more for years to come.

Kimball Benson, Utah